

Cheese spreads made in the area

By **STEPHANIE M. MANGINO**
The Winchester Star

WINCHESTER — Miss Bonnie's Gourmet Cheese Spreads are served at the Virginia Executive Mansion, available at hundreds of grocery stores and soon to be offered at military commissaries.

And they're made just north of Winchester in a refrigerated plant at 1152 Martinsburg Pike (U.S. 11).

Miss Bonnie's Gourmet Cheeses are offered in three varieties: Pimento Cheese Spread, Jalepeño Pepper Cheese Spread and Classic Cheddar Cheese Spread.

The first was the pimiento variety — which Bonnie Adleman has made for her family for at least 20 years — she said in a recent telephone interview.

Bonnie, 64, lives in the Richmond area, where Miss Bonnie's spreads came to life and were produced for several years in a kitchen above her and husband Ron's Midlothian garage.

The products are 100 percent real cheese, she said. Real cheese produces a "much, much better result" than processed cheese foods, she said.

The spreads contain no sugars, carbohydrates, or gluten fillers, the Miss Bonnie's website states.

Bonnie, previously the owner of a modeling agency and advertising business, developed the spread because as a Southern woman, she said she felt she should like one of the region's signature foods — pimiento cheese.

But she didn't.

She kept trying ones from stores, but none suited her.

An avid cook, she started experimenting on her own version of the classic at home, with her husband as her primary taster.

She said she never really had a set recipe but worked from ideas



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ABOVE: Miss Bonnie's Gourmet Cheese Spreads are made north of Winchester in a refrigerated plant at 1152 Martinsburg Pike (U.S. 11).

RIGHT: Bonnie Adleman (right) of Midlothian has made the cheese spread for her family for at least 20 years.

Photo provided by Bonnie Adleman

stored in her mind.

What she created isn't a typical pimiento cheese. "It is different," she said.

The products she developed can be used as more than cracker spreads, she added. "It's really delicious on a baked potato," and it can top burgers and hot dogs.

They melt easily into chili, too. "Oh, man it's so good," Bonnie said.

They can be used to create a rich macaroni and cheese, as well, she said.

The spread is an excellent start for a great grilled cheese sandwich, Ron added. "It's so unique and very addictive."

Any time when regular cheese is used, Miss Bonnie's can substitute, she said.

Production of the cheese spreads started in Winchester in October, said local plant operations manager Pressley Pullen.

It was also made a little over a year before at a plant he revamped in Front Royal. When Pullen sold

See **Area**, Page **C6**



Try this recipe

Star staff report

Miss Bonnie's products have many uses and are the main ingredient in Miss Bonnie's Ultimate Mac & Cheese.

Miss Bonnie's Ultimate Mac & Cheese

Ingredients:

1 pound of elbow macaroni (use shells or your favorite pasta shape)
2½ tablespoons all-purpose flour
½ teaspoon salt
Dash of black pepper
2 cups of milk
2 jars (1 pound) Miss Bonnie's Classic Cheddar Cheese Spread (use your favorite Miss Bonnie's flavor)
Optional — 1 or 2 cans of diced tomatoes (14.5 oz. cans; Bonnie uses 2 cans)

Cook macaroni and set aside to drain in colander, keeping macaroni moist.

In a medium saucepan, add and mix milk, flour, salt and pepper, over medium-low heat. Add 1½ jars of Miss Bonnie's Cheese (set aside ½ jar for topping).

Stir until thick as everything warms in pan.

Combine macaroni with cheese sauce. (Combine diced tomatoes here if using tomatoes. Do not drain liquid).

Put in covered casserole or baking dish. Bake covered 20 to 30 minutes at 350 degrees. Remove from oven after baking 15 minutes and add remaining cheese for topping. Return to oven until done.

Area

from **Page C5**

that location, the move to Winchester occurred.

The Martinsburg Pike facility can produce in a few hours what would require all week to make in the garage, said Pullen, who connected with the Adlemans when they were looking for a larger facility.

Monthly production figures vary, depending on orders, he said.

Pullen is an independent businessman who said he has always worked in food-related businesses. He has called the Winchester area home since 1969.



The Miss Bonnie's story began in 2005, when Bonnie gave a Kroger deli manager some of the pimiento cheese spread she made for her family and hoped to market.

That deli manager gave the spread to the store manager, who loved it and started the process of getting the spread into stores. Eventually, the store manager took the spread to a Kroger regional meeting, according to the Miss Bonnie's website.

Kroger liked the spread and wanted to stock it. However, Bonnie wanted to start slowly and began only in the store to which she originally took her cheese spread.

She and her family made 10 cases of the spread — with 12 jars in each — for the first day of sales — the day before Thanksgiving 2006.

"We sold almost all 10 cases on our first day," Bonnie says on the website. "The



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Miss Bonnie's Gourmet Cheese Spread is made in the Winchester area.

next day was Thanksgiving, and I didn't have any more cheese to restock the store for Friday. Postponing Thanksgiving dinner until Friday, we made 12 more cases of cheese on Thanksgiving day."

Bonnie said by phone that she never anticipated having a full-fledged food career. "I just wanted to sell one jar," she said.

Although the spreads — the jalapeño was the second to be introduced, then the cheddar cheese product — are manufactured in Winchester now, the Adlemans are still hands-on.

They created their labels and Ron does the photography for the company. Bonnie still makes store visits and conducts tastings in the Richmond and Charlottesville ar-

reas, as well.

The move into some military commissaries is expected to begin this month, Ron said. "For a small company like ours, [this] is a really big deal."

The spreads have been sold in Giant/Martin's Food Stores in the Winchester area, Northern Virginia, Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Delaware since October.

They are also available in additional Martin's stores (formerly Ukrop's), in central Virginia, and more than 100 Kroger stores in eight states, according to the website, which the couple designed. An online store also debuted the products recently.

The cheeses are used in the Virginia executive mansion mainly because of Bonnie's long-standing connec-

tions there. In an earlier time, she said, she did makeup for governors, their wives, and families.

The woman who runs the mansion just happens to love the cheese and the executive mansion chef, Todd Schneider, also cooks with it.

He has created a pork tenderloin recipe using the jalapeño and cheddar cheese spreads, which can be found online at executivemansion.virginia.gov/chef.cfm.

Another recipe, for Potato Pave, with Miss Bonnie's products, can also be found at the site.

On the Internet . . .
missbonnies.com

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